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IN MEMORIAM

SARAH A. McKIM

1813-1891



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SARAH ALLIBONE McKIM.

MRS. McKIM, widow of JAMES MILLER McKIM, died at her home in Llewellyn Park, West Orange, N. J., on January 9, 1891. At the funeral services held there on January 12, the following words were spoken by WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON, JR.:

We come to take a tender farewell of one who, in her long and useful life, was endeared to many hearts. A length of years was permitted to her beyond the Scriptural allotment, and, like the ripened fruit, she has, in the fulness of time, simply and naturally fallen to the earth. The infirmities of age had made her latter days a burden, and the final summons

> "Came not in terrors, as the King of kings,
> But kind and good, with healing in its wings."

We gather together not to mourn because of the blessed release, but rather to rejoice in the benevolence of death that opens to the weary and afflicted

the door of escape from human ills. What lies beyond may be safely left to the Power that brought us here, and we may assume with Emerson that "whatever it be which the great Providence prepares for us, it must be something large and generous, in the great style of his works."

If to create the conditions of heaven here be a passport to the heaven elsewhere, who doubts the welcome that awaited her? The frail body which we lay away to-day, never robust at its best, yet encased a spirit of rare quality. She was

> "one in whom
> The spring-time of her childish years
> Hath never lost its fresh perfume,
> Though knowing well that life hath room
> For many blights and many tears."

The blights and tears were many and bitter, but her cheerfulness and philosophy surmounted all, and her perennial sense of humor preserved her from any morbid views of life. And happiness in great measure was also her portion. A youth of simplicity and freedom, a marriage as nearly ideal as mutual affection and congenial natures could produce, children befitting such harmony, a home to be remembered for its light and love,— these were her blessings. And more were added. The husband and father was a reformer, identified prominently with the great moral and religious movement of the century which sought the abolition of American slavery, and in the days of trial he was ever strengthened and sustained by the sympathy and support of the dear helpmate

whose semblance is with us, but whose spirit, let us hope, is reunited to his. Together they passed through years of persecution and anxiety, and of deliberate defiance of wicked laws, in order to shield the flying fugitive from Southern bondage. Their house was an ever-open shelter to conceal the outcast from his Christian kidnappers, and the midnight transportation of the guest to the next haven of safety was a common experience in these devoted lives. More than all the personal danger incurred were the inseparable social opprobrium and religious proscription.

If society and church frowned upon these faithful disciples of the true Christ, the fellowship of the noblest characters of the age was opened to them. It was Socrates who said: "If death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead are, what good, O my friends and judges, can be greater than this? . . . What would a man not give if he might converse with Orpheus, and Musæus, and Hesiod, and Homer? Nay, if this be true, let me die again and again. I, too, shall have a wonderful interest in a place where I can converse with Palamedes, and Ajax the son of Telamon, and other heroes of old who have suffered death through an unjust judgment." And if the eye of faith can see our dear friend once more commingling with the saints and martyrs of the anti-slavery movement, among whom she was ever welcome upon earth, the reality can only make her lot an enviable one. I love to imagine the greeting of Lucretia Mott and James, whose neighbor and beloved friend she was for so

long a period, and whose names, above all others, I am sure she would wish pronounced on this occasion. Their home had a charm to her beyond all others, outside her own, and she loved to dwell reverently and affectionately upon their friendship and memory.

When the rare companionship of so many years was broken by the husband's death, none of us can forget what force of character and resignation our dear friend manifested. The cross was sweetly borne, the domestic cares and duties were cheerfully continued and, though "the flesh will quiver when the pincers tear," all outward signs of suffering and loneliness were repressed, and the children's home was kept in sunshine by her presence.

> "The blessing of her quiet life
> Fell on us like the dew;
> And good thoughts, where her footsteps pressed,
> Like fairy blossoms grew."

Later came the unexpected blow, in the loss of her daughter, that to many natures would have brought despair and bred distrust in the eternal goodness; but her serenity was unimpaired, her faith unweakened. Having reared her own children and reached that period of life when a partial rest, at least, is looked for, again she bravely assumed the place of mother to her bereaved grandchildren, and, though the light of her eyes had been snatched away, still made herself a light for the family. Well may they rise up and call her blessed!

If the speculative questions of theology had little interest for her, she believed profoundly in the inner light which her Quaker education had taught her to respect, and her outward life conformed faithfully to its requirements. She was uninfluenced by hope of future reward or fear of punishment, and her creed was included in Pope's "Universal Prayer"—

> "What conscience dictates to be done
> Or warns me not to do,
> This teach me more than hell to shun,
> That more than heaven pursue."

Let me close with her favorite poet Whittier's lines, which speak her sentiment and faith, and with which we can console ourselves:

> "The dear home faces whereupon
> That fitful firelight paled and shone,
> Henceforward, listen as we will,
> The voices of that hearth are still;
> Look where we may, the wide earth o'er,
> Those lighted faces shine no more.
>
>
>
> Yet Love will dream, and Faith will trust,
> (Since He who knows our need is just,)
> That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
> Alas for him who never sees
> The stars shine through his cypress trees!
> Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
> Nor looks to see the breaking day
> Across the mournful marbles play!
> Who hath not learned in hours of faith
> The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
> That Life is ever lord of Death,
> And Love can never lose its own."

WENDELL PHILLIPS GARRISON said:

There is a time to rejoice even in the presence of the dead. For their sake we must be glad that all is over when life has lost its charm, its tolerableness, its indispensableness to others. The once pillar of this home, now prostrate, we have watched for years bend beneath the infirmities of the body until it could stand no longer. Infinitely pathetic and harrowing to our affection has been this slow decay which is the act of dying — the struggle between the indomitable will, spurred on by duty and by pride of independence, and the failing powers and senses of a slight yet wiry constitution. The time came when we could not wish her existence prolonged.

If the circumstances of Mrs. McKim's release forbid us to grieve for her, neither in the present hour should grief for ourselves be predominant. She would have exacted of her friends assembled about her neither mourning tokens nor sorrowful countenances. The natural daylight, not artificial gloom; a rational acceptance of the common lot, not only of man but of all organic beings; a truthful picture of the character of the departed — such would have been her preference in respect to her funeral obsequies.

Who was this woman, known to this neighborhood for the past quarter of a century? Whence came she? What did she do? What unfamiliar titles has she to our love and lasting remembrance?

Sarah Allibone Speakman was the youngest of the five children of Micajah Speakman and Phœbe



Smith, members of the Society of Friends, into which she was born on March 1, 1813, in the country village of Concord, Delaware County, Pa. Here the first thirteen years of her life were spent before the removal of the family to Highland Farm in the adjoining Chester County, where, in a like period of fourteen years, girlhood merged into womanhood, and Sarah Speakman became Sarah McKim. These early days were a pure delight in rural scenes and outdoor sports and romping, the foundation of health and strength, and the source of a love of nature which never forsook her. Lonesomeness amid trees and grass and sky she never knew, and her final home on this spot was actually in the woods.

She had little schooling — all of it under Quaker instruction, and the latter part at a boarding-school until the state of her mother's health required her presence at home. Both at home and at school, music was an abomination. Phœbe Schofield, Sarah's old grandmother, a widely travelled Quaker minister, held firmly to this article of the creed. "Art thou in pain?" she would ask rebukingly when Sarah's sweet voice broke forth in unpremeditated song. Dancing was a still greater depravity, and Sarah was only saved from that because one must learn to dance, whereas song is spontaneous. To her latest day, her feet irresistibly kept time to dance-music as if there were no such thing as original sin. She loved to be with her brothers in their plays and excursions, following gun and rod, and was almost deemed a tomboy for it. But she grew up slender and refined, free from the suspicion of coarseness or rusticity.

At nineteen came her first grief, the loss of her mother. At twenty-one her father took another wife, who gained the respect and affection of her step-children. At twenty-four Sarah was engaged to be married. Meanwhile there had been no dearth of suitors and proposals: few women have so many as did this Quaker beauty, with her clear, merry eye, her soft heart for everybody, her fatal winsomeness. Her father was loth to let her go. "Sarah is delicate," he would urge by way of discouraging attentions that threatened to end in matrimony; intimating that she might perish on the hands of her future husband. This dreaded person at length appeared from without the Quaker fold — not only one of the "world's people" but a "hireling priest," no other than a Presbyterian clergyman, by name James Miller McKim. To be sure, he had preached but a single year, pending his decision whether to embark in foreign missions, or to heed the awful claims of the heathen at home — the dark, unlettered, brutish black population of the Southern States, condemned by solemn national compact to endless servitude, chains, and cruelty. Sarah Speakman had been used to see fugitives from across the Maryland border concealed and employed on her father's farm; the family was an abolition household; the young anti-slavery lecturer was welcomed in that capacity.

But what an unpromising match to make, with an impecunious agent of the most unpopular, hated, and persecuted reformatory movement in America, during that reign of terror when Lovejoy for his free press was shot down in Illinois, when Pennsylvania

Hall was openly burnt in Philadelphia for being dedicated to free speech, when pro-slavery mobs were the order of the day in all the North. Sarah Speakman attended the abolition meetings in Pennsylvania Hall while a fierce rabble surrounded it, hurling stones through the windows, and threatening the fiery destruction which was speedily carried out with the connivance of the city authorities. These things did not daunt her; neither did the financial depression caused by the panic of 1837. With a high courage she obeyed her affections, was united to Mr. McKim in 1840, and for fifteen years made her humble but happy home in the city of Philadelphia, where her husband became the resident publishing agent of the Pennsylvania Anti-slavery Society. Here, amid the growing excitement of the times on the subject of slavery, and the multiplication of fugitive-slave cases, there was constant work on behalf of the cause. About the neighboring Quaker home of James and Lucretia Mott clustered the little circle ostracized by polite society for its vulgar assertion of human rights, but self-sufficient for all the requirements of duty and all the pleasures of human association. The annual Bazaar was a festival of good-feeling, and Sarah McKim as a saleswoman proved an unrivaled magnet. At anti-slavery meetings she sometimes sang in a way to touch all hearts.

The home was yet in Philadelphia when Mrs. McKim's two and only children were born to her, a girl and a boy. These were still young when it seemed best to remove to the suburb of Germantown, where the next ten years were spent and the family

kept free from debt only by the most judicious housekeeping—even by judicious housebuilding and exchange of home after home. Cheerfully was the burden assumed by the wife, who extended her motherly care to her husband's orphaned nieces, as well as to the children of her own sisters. The bread thus cast upon the waters returned to her after many days.

In 1859 occurred the attack on Harper's Ferry by John Brown. The present generation cannot imagine the effect of it. The tremendous conflict of opposing civilizations was steadily culminating when Brown fired, for the second time in our history, the shot heard round the world. On the eve of his execution, leave was granted to Mrs. Brown to visit Charlestown, Va., to recover her husband's dead body. On this sorrowful journey she was attended by Hector Tyndale of Philadelphia and Mr. McKim; and that she might not lack a companion of her own sex, Mrs. McKim joined the party. Such was the panic state of the Virginians that even this mission was watched as jealously as if it were an armed force seeking to rescue the prisoner from his fate. As they walked about the town, bullets whistled overhead, and prudence required that they should keep within doors.

The war followed apace, and even Pennsylvania was invaded. A soldier for the Union came to claim Mrs. McKim's adopted daughter. In 1865 her own daughter was married and went to reside in New York. The son went away to college. Nothing could be more intimate than the relations of Mrs. McKim with her children, and the separation was ill-

endured. Moreover, her husband transferred his labors, now bestowed upon the freedmen, to New York, and he presently looked about for a new home in which mother and daughter at least could be reunited. Chance led him to Llewellyn Park, and here in June, 1866, the double family established itself, harmoniously and happily. Here the grandchildren were born and grew to be men and women—joys almost as deep as those of immediate parentage. Here, too, the husband, who had been the object of the wifeliest devotion, passed from earth in 1874, followed only three years later by their daughter. With perfect courage and resignation, Mrs. McKim, at the age of 64, continued to direct the household, and assumed the care of the motherless. She became the bond that held our little universe together. With the new need of her, it seemed as if there came a new lease of life. The old grace of person and refinement of manner remained to gild her declining years; and, dimmed as some of her senses were, toward the very last, her strong mind and ready wit, her ceaseless thought of others, triumphed over all her physical infirmities while consciousness was retained.

Her patience and considerateness in the sick-room were remarkable, but they did not surpass her habitual fortitude in the remoter approaches to dissolution. Daily paroxysms of solitary suffering, for which there was hardly any relief, were endured without a murmur and rarely acknowledged upon inquiry. She had great faith in the recuperative powers of nature, and much distrust of the medical

faculty, as was indeed excusable to one of her generation. A little tract in rhyme, called "Law, Physic, and Divinity," which denied any one of these professions an excuse for existence, she took much pleasure in distributing, especially to her medical friends. She believed strongly in the efficacy of good nursing, and carried her son through the small-pox, her grandchildren through the scarlet fever, without a tremor. She thoroughly understood her own constitution and its needs; resisted the temptation to lie down when fatigued or indisposed, but rather took a broom and worked herself well; had an oversight of the garden and the outside premises generally, pulling the corn and other vegetables; and kept herself busy and stirring.

Of all the domestic arts of her sex she preferred general housekeeping; prided herself on her ability to cook and to dispense on occasion with any servant — often gave her cook a long vacation by taking her place in the kitchen; made bread with her own hands as long as strength permitted — at first to gratify her husband's palate, and afterwards her own. She ministered to her servants as much as to any member of the family; reproved them by doing well what they had done badly or neglected altogether — "to shame them," as she used to say. As her forte was service, her mode of teaching was by example.

Her predominant trait was unselfishness, which took on the most elusive manifestations. It seemed as if she could hardly indulge a personal motive without such a sanction as, in appearance at least,

substituted another's volition for her own. Her sympathy and charity were inexhaustible. How kind she was to her dependents, how obliging and attentive to her neighbors, there are those here who do not need to be told. Great was her modesty and her diffidence before strangers, and few suspected the nerve which lay behind her gentle shyness. She used to say that she could cut off a limb or even a head, if it were necessary and clearly in the line of duty. When, in 1868, she was riding with two of her most intimate Quaker friends in Orange, the carriage was run down and trampled over by a runaway team, and all the inmates were sadly bruised, and scarred for life. On a bystander's remarking on the singular circumstance that none of these ladies fainted, one replied, "We are not of the fainting kind." The words were not Mrs. McKim's, but she was the oldest of the party, in her 56th year, and she did not faint. Still, this accident permanently affected her self-control, and she never afterward could drive with pleasure. So an early experience with a house on fire made her always fearful in this regard.

Her humor was as great as her unselfishness. It removed all friction and dissonance from home life, and rendered intercourse with her delightful, both in conversation and (among her nearest friends) in her correspondence. In thought it was irrepressible, no matter how solemn the occasion. It was one of her subtle charms which are not to be described any more than her beauty could be fixed on canvas by the painter or on paper by the sun. Another of her charms was undoubtedly her Quakerism, divested of

the sect's distinctive garb, but retaining its sweetness and purity of expression and its thee and thou in speech. To marry outside of Quakerdom was an offense liable to disownment, and she was, in fact, mildly menaced with this penalty. She replied demurely to her censors, that she regretted exceedingly being obliged to violate the rule of the Society; and this apology was accepted, in default of a better. She was not disowned, and she never ceased to walk in the spirit and communion of Friends.

It was a great shock to her when she first perceived her failing strength, and that there were some things she could undertake no longer. With reluctance she relinquished a part of the cares of housekeeping, repelled the advice to enjoy well-merited ease, and insisted on some, however insignificant, share in the domestic concerns. Till within two months of her final summons, and when she was literally "ready for the gentlest stroke of death," she constrained herself to rise punctually for the early breakfast, however poor and exhausting the night. She accepted her last illness with dignity, bore quietly the terrible discomfort of the sitting posture enforced by her disease, the deprivation of change of scene, the monotony of undivided days, the slow but steady progress of the inevitable disintegration.

"The *saint* sustained it, but the woman died."

She made all her preparations for death by remembering others with tokens and legacies, tying up the parcels with her own hands. She had lost the fear of the great transition which sometimes haunted her —



the *physical* fear entirely; and the lurking moral fear had reference only to the meeting with her beloved husband. A Scripture text meant to cheer the believer, "In my father's house are many mansions," conveyed to her the idea that she might be found unworthy to inhabit the same mansion with her husband, whose goodness she did not exaggerate except in comparison with her own.

—She is gone, this dear and rare woman, this ministering angel as we must always think of her; and shall we ever see her again? We do not know. May we hope — wish — pray — believe in a future existence, in a reunion of friends and kindred? We may; and none can contradict or disprove. She survives in the grateful recollection of such of us as knew her; in her living posterity; in the endless contagion of her good deeds; and in that unconscious

"argument
Her life to her neighbor's creed has lent."

That perennial youthfulness which was so striking, which made her at all epochs companionable to the young, had, we may well comfort ourselves, its spring in something eternal and imperishable.

It is time to be old,
To take in sail: —
The god of bounds,
Who sets to seas a shore,
Came to me in his fatal rounds,
And said: "No more!

No farther shoot
Thy broad ambitious branches, and thy root.
Fancy departs: no more invent;
Contract thy firmament
To compass of a tent.
There 's not enough for this and that,
Make thy option which of two;
Economize the failing river,
None the less revere the Giver,
Leave the many and hold the few,
Timely wise accept the terms,
Soften the fall with wary foot;
A little while
Still plan and smile,
And — fault of novel germs —
Mature the unfallen fruit. . ."

As the bird trims her to the gale,
I trim myself to the storm of time,
I man the rudder, reef the sail,
Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime:
"Lowly faithful, banish fear,
Right onward drive unharmed;
The port, well worth the cruise, is near,
And every wave is charmed."

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

To C. F. McKim, from Miss Graceanna Lewis:

"To-day the last duties of affection will be given to the worn-out frame of your beloved mother; and as one of the very few of the old abolitionists who are still living, I would like to tell you how sweetly I remember the lovely, modest, and exquisitely refined and beautiful young woman, Sarah Speakman, as I used to see her at Kimberton, and at the meetings we both attended. She was the beloved friend of my friends of the Kimber family; and the bright, pure, sweet face which was then hers is before me now as it was then, in all the freshness of young womanhood — a lovely picture which I hope to carry with me to our eternal home. She and Gertrude Kimber [afterwards the wife of Charles Burleigh], both residing within the bounds of my birth-circle, were two of the rarest of the young women of Eastern Pennsylvania, and to me both were models of excellence, each in her own way. I count it one of the great blessings of my life that I knew them in my early life, and that I lived in the same period with them.

"I also remember Sarah Speakman McKim, as a wife and mother, retaining all the promise of her youth, beloved and honored as she had the full right to be, and

shedding light not alone on her family and her time, but on her sex. I have not seen her for more than forty years, but she stands to me as a representative of saintly womanhood. As such, I keep her to-day; as such I think of her amid the glorious company with whom her pure soul has now found its natural companionship, with its earthly bounds widened — how broadly, we may not imagine. Until we each experience the same great change, none of us can *know* the joys of eternity; but this we do know, that as nearly as are most mortals, she was fitted to receive what our Heavenly Father intends as the fulfilment of the destiny of his loving and obedient children.

"Hoping that her descendants may transmit her qualities to the latest generation, I am her friend and theirs."

To W. P. Garrison, from General J. D. Cox:

"I do indeed remember Mrs. McKim, and am saddened at the news of her death. She seemed to me to combine, in a remarkable way, the refined delicacy of a high-bred woman with a clear intellect and power of conscience which would have made a martyr in time of need. When she and your wife were together at the sweet home in Llewellyn Park, and your children were little things, you seemed to be among the most enviable of men, for few homes were so bright with every sweet and good influence as that was."

ON HER SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY.

Age cannot wither her whom not gray hairs
 Nor furrowed cheeks have made the thrall of time;
 For Spring lies hidden under Winter's rime,
 And violets know the victory is theirs.
Even so the corn of Egypt, unawares,
 Proud Nilus shelters with engulfing slime;
 So Etna's hardening crust a more sublime
 Volley of pent-up fires at last prepares.
O face yet fair, if paler, and serene
 With sense of duty done without complaint!
 O venerable crown! — a living green,
Strength to the weak, and courage to the faint —
 Thy bleaching locks, thy wrinkles, have but been
 Fresh beads upon the rosary of a saint!

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GENEALOGICAL MEMORANDA.

THOMAS[1] SPEAKMAN came, with approbation of Friends, from Reading, Berks, England, to Pennsylvania in 1712. In 1722 he bought land in Londongrove township, Chester Co. He married in 1714 Ann ———, and died in 1732. Their son

MICAJAH[2] SPEAKMAN was born in 1726; in 1781 married for his second wife the widow Phœbe (Schofield) Yarnall [1739–1828]; and died in 1805. Their son

MICAJAH[3] SPEAKMAN was born in 1782; in 1803 married for his first wife Phœbe Smith [1785–1832]; and died in 1852. Their daughter

SARAH[4] ALLIBONE SPEAKMAN was born in Concordville, Delaware Co., Pa., March 1, 1813; in 1840 married James Miller McKim; and died in Llewellyn Park, West Orange, N. J., January 9, 1891. Her grave is in Rosedale Cemetery, Orange.

JAMES[1] MCKIM was born in the north of Ireland about 1756, and removed to America in 1774; married Hannah McIlvaine; and died in 1794. Their son

JAMES[2] MCKIM was born in 1779; in 1808 married Catharine Miller [1783–1831]; and died in 1831. Their son

JAMES[3] MILLER MCKIM was born near Carlisle, Cumberland Co., Pa., November 14, 1810; on October 1, 1840,



married Sarah Allibone Speakman; and died in Llewellyn Park, June 13, 1874. His grave is in Rosedale Cemetery. A full biographical sketch of Mr. McKim will be found on page 654 of William Still's "History of the Underground Railroad."

Own children of J. M. and S. A. McKim were:

Lucy McKim, born in Philadelphia, October 30, 1842; married December 6, 1865, Wendell Phillips Garrison; died in Llewellyn Park, May 11, 1877. Her grave is in Rosedale Cemetery.

Charles Follen McKim, born at Isabella Furnace, Chester Co., Pa., August 24, 1847; married June 25, 1885, Julia Amory Appleton [1859–1887].

An adopted daughter (niece of J. M. McKim) was:

Annie Catherine McKim, born in Carlisle, Pa., August 3, 1841; married October 1, 1863, James Frederick Dennis [1842–1886].

Grandchildren of J. M. and S. A. McKim are:

Lloyd McKim Garrison, born in Llewellyn Park, May 4, 1867.

Philip McKim Garrison, born in Llewellyn Park, September 28, 1869.

Katherine McKim Garrison, born in Llewellyn Park, May 10, 1873.

James McKim Dennis, born in Auburn, N. Y., November 14, 1864; died in Orange, N. J., October 22, 1882.

Cyrus Cornell Dennis, born in Auburn, N. Y., May 24, 1867; died in Plattsburgh, N. Y., December 30, 1884.